

Honorable Vic Snyder  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Military Personnel  
Armed Services Committee  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Snyder,

I was disappointed to hear that the personnel subcommittee passed an amendment to Chapter 349, title 10, USC, which would prohibit the assignment of women soldiers to Forward Support Companies. The inclusion of such language in the Defense Authorization Bill is a mistake because it creates serious readiness issues.

My reasons for opposition to this amendment are as follows:

- (1) Army men and women have performed with competence and courage on an asymmetrical battlefield that has no front lines and where all soldiers face the threat of having to fight anywhere in the theater. Is there an argument for this amendment based on any principle more relevant than Army readiness?
- (2) With the nation at war and the Army leadership engaged in conducting that war, why would we want to distract them on the question of new limitations on the service of women? Certainly, there will continue to be discourse about women's roles in the military but that should come as we reflect upon lessons learned and not while engaging the enemy. This is bad timing and sends an unnecessarily negative message to both the Nation and to serving women and men.
- (3) Nearly 27 per cent of the Army's combat service support soldiers are women. To decide not to use one-fourth of your people makes no sense. The numbers of those affected by this policy change are enormous because this change affects not only women but the men in these units and it affects the combat arms units served by these units.
- (4) Every quarter, the Army strives to reach established recruitment missions and, as of late, has failed to do so. Not only has the Army missed the recruitment quotas but is now experiencing end-strength shortfalls as well. Stop-Loss helped for a time but people are in short supply. If we cannot recruit enough men to fill the combat arms, how will we recruit the additional men for the combat service support that this policy change will require?
- (5) This legislation is insulting to women, especially in light of their substantial contributions and high performance for over 60 years in the US Army.

- (6) Finally I oppose this legislation because the Army is opposed to it. The role of Congress is not to reach deep into the way the Army leadership commands and controls it forces. That is something the Army leadership should be trusted to do. Congress has confirmed the appointments of our country's Army leaders and should permit them to do their jobs. What the Army needs the Congress' help on is the provision of sufficient resources to take care of the substantial shortfalls in equipment being experienced while we are at war. We can discuss the social implications of personnel assignment policies later.

At this moment, the Department of Defense and the Army leadership need our support as this war continues. We should be making their jobs easier by relaxing artificial collocation constraints rather than tying their hands by politically motivated legislation.

Sincerely,



Claudia J. Kennedy  
Lieutenant General  
US Army, Retired